THE HISTORY OF SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY



Write a word in each gap to complete the text.

Every February, across the country, sweets, flowers, and gifts are exchanged **1)** _____ loved ones, all in the name of Saint Valentine. But **2)** _____ is this mysterious saint and **3)** _____ do we celebrate this holiday? The history of Valentine's Day — and its patron saint — is surrounded **4)** _____ mystery. But we do know that February has **5)** _____ a month of romance. Saint Valentine's Day, **6)** _____ we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition.

One legend contends that Valentine **7)** _____ a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers **8)** _____ those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine, realizing the injustice **9)** _____ the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers **10)**_____ secret. When Valentine's actions **11)** _____ discovered, Claudius ordered that he should be put to death.

12) _____ to one legend, Valentine actually sent the first 'valentine' greeting himself. While in prison, it is believed that Valentine fell in love **13)** _____ a young girl — who may **14)** _____ been his jailer's daughter — who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter, **15)** _____ he signed 'From your Valentine,' an expression that is still in use today. Although the truth **16)** _____ the Valentine legends is not clear, the stories certainly emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic, and, most importantly, romantic figure.

While some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February **17)** _____ commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death or burial, **18)** _____ claim that the Christian church may have decided to celebrate Valentine's feast day in the middle of February **19)** _____ an effort to 'christianize' celebrations of the pagan *Lupercalia*, which was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as **20)** _____ as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

In Great Britain, Valentine's Day began to **21)** _____ popularly celebrated around the seventeenth century. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it was common **22)** _____ friends and lovers to exchange small gifts **23)** _____ affection or handwritten notes. By the end of the century, printed cards began to replace written letters due **24)** _____ improvements **25)** _____ printing technology.

LIVEWORKSHEETS